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Thomas H. Carr

**National HIDTA Directors Association**

August 16, 2005

The Honorable Mark E. Souder  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Criminal Justice,  
Drug Policy and Human Resources  
Committee on Government Reform  
2157 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6143

Dear Chairman Souder:

I recently received a copy of your letter to Michael Leavitt, Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), regarding the harm reduction conference recently sponsored by HHS in Utah. Like you, I was shocked and dismayed to learn of a federal agency lending its support to such an irresponsible and dangerous strategy for addressing the threat that methamphetamine poses.

The dangers posed by methamphetamine are hardly a secret; in fact, they were highlighted in a feature-length article published in Newsweek magazine just two weeks ago. As I am sure you are aware, a number of HIDTA regions, most notably the Midwest and Central Valley HIDTAs, had been specifically created to help law enforcement agencies deal with regional methamphetamine threats. Most HIDTAs located in the Western, Midwestern and Southern states consider methamphetamine to be the single greatest drug threat facing their regions. The rapid expansion of methamphetamine production and use in the 1990s and its continuing spread into previously unaffected areas of the country make it clear that methamphetamine will likely be a significant problem in America for years to come.

Methamphetamine's relative ease of manufacture and powerfully addictive nature have taken a heavy toll on America's methamphetamine addicts and their communities. While many rural communities have been relatively unaffected by surges in the use of cocaine and heroin over the past 25 years, they have been unable to escape the spread of methamphetamine abuse. Methamphetamine addiction is widely recognized as a contributing factor to numerous social ills ranging from domestic violence to failure in school to high-risk sexual practices. The complex and costly process of cleaning up clandestine lab sites is daunting to even the wealthiest jurisdiction. It is hard to see how anyone could believe that any good whatsoever can come from methamphetamine use.



The willingness of HHS to sponsor the Utah harm reduction conference raises concern about how effectively the federal government is coordinating its response to the methamphetamine threat. While many drug control agencies such as ONDCP and DEA have taken clear, unequivocal positions in opposition to harm reduction efforts, this incident indicates that these positions are not universally held by all drug control agencies. As the federal government's lead drug control agency, ONDCP is responsible for seeing that federal agencies present a unified front in addressing illegal drug threats. Unfortunately, I have seen little evidence that ONDCP is taking a leadership role in coordinating the response to significant drug control issues such as methamphetamine abuse or harm reduction. I share the concerns that you and your Subcommittee have voiced regarding the need for ONDCP to take a more public and active role in helping the federal government develop an integrated response to the problems illegal drugs pose.

Thank you for stepping forward and bringing this matter to the attention of the Congress and the Secretary of Health and Human Services. I appreciate the attention you have given to drug control issues and I look forward to working with you and your fellow Members of Congress in the future.

Sincerely,

Thomas H. Carr  
Treasurer